

On the Line:

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Red China Has Her Son

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By BOB CONSIDINE

"I REALLY don't see how he does it," a brave Yonkers school teacher named Mrs. Ruth Redmond said of her son, Hugh. Mrs. Redmond's friends say the same of Mrs. Redmond. She can take it, too.

Redmond, now 42, is serving a life sentence in a Red Chinese prison in Shanghai — the old Ward Road Prison once operated by the British in the days of extraterritoriality. He was arrested at his place of business, an import-export firm, when the Communists took over Shanghai. That was 1949.



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For three years there was no word of him, and all but his mother considered him dead. Then a blunt announcement from behind the Bamboo Curtain that he had been convicted by a Peoples' Court and condemned to life imprisonment. There is no court of appeal.

Mrs. Redmond immediately asked permission to visit her son. The appeal passed through the Red Cross in Yonkers, on to National Red Cross headquarters, thence to the Chinese Red Cross through the International Red Cross. Five years later the word suddenly came that she, as a "blood relative," might come to Shanghai. That was in January, 1958.

"He looked as good as could be expected," Mrs. Redmond said the other day as she waited for the word that would again start her off on another long and poignant voyage half-way around the world.

The word must originate with the Red Chinese government, which has rejected appeals of a private and official nature to release Redmond, Bishop James Walsh of the Maryknoll Missionary Order, and two U. S. Army civilian employees, John Downey and Richard Fecteau, who were captured during the Korean War.

Mrs. Redmond must pay her own expenses. She is being assisted in this by "The Committee for the Release of Hugh Redmond," c/o City Hall, Yonkers. "I hope Hugh is at least a three-months' vacation of vitamins," Mrs. Red-

mond said quietly. "I get an occasional letter from him, censored, of course, and there's generally a mention of vitamins. I'll also take him some shoes — I know he needs them — and shirts and shorts."

She made no mention of the personal rigors of such a trip.

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THE U. S. and Red China have no diplomatic relations, and none are foreseen in the immediate future. But ever since the Summit meeting at Geneva in 1955 there have been sporadic meetings at the ambassadorial level between the two countries.

Redmond has figured prominently in those discussions, as have Bishop Walsh and the additional two Americans known to be in prison. Gen. James Van Fleet has placed the number of prisoners being held at a much higher figure.

An organization named Fighting Home Folks of Fighting Men, based in Colorado Springs and headed by a retired U. S. Army captain who lost a son in Korea, has placed the number of American POWs at about 3,000. Repeated efforts to prod Washington into "acting" have been submitted to the present and the previous two Administrations.

The four Americans referred to above are in fairly frequent contact with relatives and friends in the U. S. Mrs. Redmond is permitted to send books to her son twice a month, and a food package once a month, she told a reporter. This holds true of Bishop Walsh, Fecteau and Downey, who is a cousin of singer-financier Morton Downey. Prisoner Downey's parents recently visited him in Peiping.

The endless contention of the Red Chinese spokesman in Sino-American talks is that the U. S. is holding "thousands" of Chinese nationals, caught here — mainly as students — during the Korean War. We have offered to let them all return. They adamantly refuse, yet send tearful letters home to China saying they are being held here against their will. The letters, of course, are written for the protection of their home-based families. In the meantime, most of them are doing well here and are as happy as clams.

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